United Nations

Daily Highlights

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F R I D A Y  H I G H L I G H T S

◆ Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar awarded Medal of Freedom -- United States Government's highest civil award -- in ceremony at White House in Washington D.C.

◆ Security Council holds consultations to consider Secretary-General's report on Yugoslavia.

◆ General Assembly adopts seven resolutions aimed at eradicating apartheid.

◆ Catherine Ann Bertini of United States appointed new Executive Director of World Food Programme for five-year term effective 5. April 1992.

◆ Argentina and Brazil sign safeguards agreement with International Atomic Energy Agency.

◆ United Nations Disaster Relief Office reports Western and American Samoa hit by cyclones, killing 4 people and severing all communications with those territories.

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Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar has been awarded the Medal of Freedom -- the highest civil award given by the Government of the United States to persons who have made specially meritorious contributions to world peace and security.

In a ceremony yesterday at the White House in Washington D.C., Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar was presented with the medal by President George Bush in recognition of his ten years of distinguished service to the world. During the ceremony, President Bush said of the Secretary-General that his life work in service to humanitarian ideals had won him honour the world over. His tenure had marked the "rebirth of the United Nations: its emergence as a force for peace", he said.

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The Secretary-General was accompanied by Mr. Giandomenico Picco, his Special Envoy, who was presented with the President's Award for Exceptional Service for his role in facilitating the release of hostages in Lebanon.

The Secretary-General's spokesman told correspondents today that Mr. Perez de Cuéllar, during a 15-minute meeting with President Bush, had discussed with him the future release of other hostages and the forthcoming negotiations on El Salvador.

Speaking to the press following the ceremony, the Secretary-General mentioned the release of the two German hostages, the search for the Israeli missing persons, the release of the Lebanese detained without due process and the return of the remains of those who died while in captivity, as" unfinished business". The spokesman said that Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar had stressed repeatedly, both to the press and to the President, that much work is being done, and that he has never stopped his diplomatic efforts even though the release of the American and British hostages took place.

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The Security Council held consultations today to consider the Secretary-General's report on Yugoslavia. Following consultations, it was announced that the Council would continue informal consultations tomorrow, Saturday, at 5:00 pm with a view to a formal meeting.

Speaking to correspondents before consultations, Sir David Hannay said it was urgent that a resolution be adopted to strengthen the Secretary-General's and Mr. Vance's hand and to indicate the Security Council's position ahead of the discussions next week in Europe.

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The General Assembly this morning appealed to the international community to support fully the "vulnerable and critical process" now under way in South Africa through a phased application of pressure on South African authorities.

It took that action when it adopted, without a vote, a resolution calling for an immediate end to violence and the removal of any remaining obstacles to free political activities in South Africa. The Assembly also called on South African authorities to enhance the climate for negotiations and appealed to the international community to provide assistance to the opponents of apartheid.

Also this morning, the Assembly, by a vote of 121 in favour to 2 against (United Kingdom and United States) with 34 abstentions, urged States to adopt legislation relating to the implementation of the arms embargo on South Africa and called on them to urge Governments and private financial institutions not to extend new loans and credits to South Africa.

Among other resolutions adopted, the Assembly strongly deplored Israel's military collaboration with South Africa and urged the Security Council to

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consider measures against Israel for its violation of the arms embargo against South Africa. The Assembly also requested all States to enforce measures prohibiting the supply and shipping of oil and petroleum products to South Africa. It further authorized the Special Committee on Apartheid to continue to monitor developments in South Africa as well as relevant actions of the international community.

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The Secretary-General and the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) have announced that they have decided to appoint Catherine Ann Bertini of the United States to the post of Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP), for a term of five years with effect from 5 April 1992.

The announcement of the appointment of Ms Bertini who is presently Assistant Secretary of Agriculture in the United States Department of Agriculture and responsible for several food assistance programmes was made at the thirty-second session of the Committee on Food aid.

The Secretary-General and the Head of FAO expressed the hope that member nations of the United Nations and of the Agency would continue to support the WFP and extend their full cooperation to the new Executive Director.

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Emphasizing their commitment to international peace and security and their recognition of the central role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the process, the President of Brazil, Fernando Collor de Mello and the President of Argentina, Carlos Saúl Menen, signed a comprehensive safeguards agreement in Vienna today with the joint Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Material (ABACC) and the IAEA.

The new safeguards agreement covers all nuclear materials in all nuclear activities within the territories of Argentina and Brazil, under their jurisdiction or carried out under their control anywhere. It further provides for the application of safeguards to exports of nuclear material and is compatible with the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America (Treaty of Tlatelolco).

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The United Nations Disaster Relief Office (UNDRO) reported today that Western and American Samoa have been hit by cyclones, killing 4 people and severing all communications with the territories.

The Agency said that aerial surveys conducted by the New Zealand air force had revealed extensive damage to housing and public buildings, many of which had been completely destroyed. Vegetation had also been stripped away and roads and power lines flattened.

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The Samoan Head of State has declared a state of emergency and has established a national disaster committee to assess relief needs. Although there has been no request for international assistance so far, Australia and the United Kingdom have provided some initial relief assistance to the territory. Other international aid includes a French naval vessel and New Zealand frigate carrying relief supplies, which are both enroute to Western Samoa, the report said.

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